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ABSTRACT

Because outdoor education complements the aims of education in a way that indoor instruction cannot, it should therefore provide the setting for experiences that cannot be achieved or achieved as readily in the classroom. Outdoor education provides pupils the chance to come to grips with reality, acquire the principles of democracy, and participate in actual work experiences. Each year greater numbers of pupils and teachers participate in outdoor learning activities and teachers must receive professional preparation for utilizing the out-of-doors as a teaching media. Outdoor education does not require new or radical teaching methods, but it does need imaginative and experimental approaches. The successful teacher must be perceptive to opportunities for capitalizing on pupil interest as it develops. Survival skills may be another crucial implication for this field of study, for schools may some day have to face the need for educating for survival in a war-decimated world. Programs for outdoor education also provide a laboratory setting for educational research and further investigation is needed in many areas, including curriculum, child development, adjustment, behavior, and instruction. Many of our natural areas are fast disappearing and modern educators can little afford to lose these outdoor laboratories for learning or to ignore the out-of-doors as a fundamental aspect of the American heritage. (DS)

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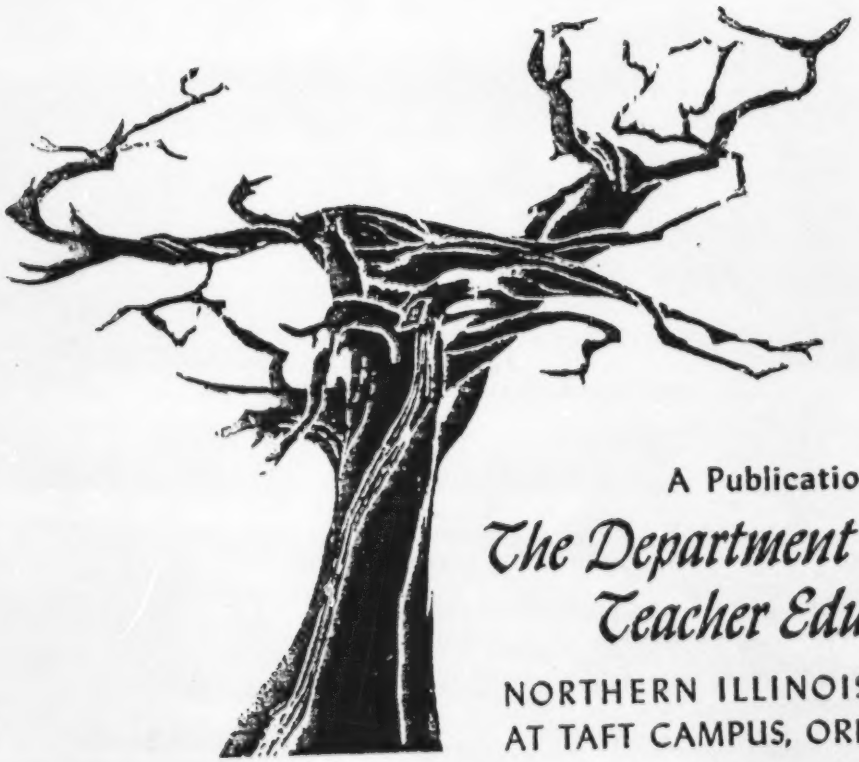

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OUTDOOR EDUCATION:

ITS ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Donald R. Hammerman

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OUTDOOR EDUCATION

ITS ROLE IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

I. THE FUNDAMENTAL TASK OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

The only rationale upon which justification for outdoor education can be maintained is on the basis that it complements, in a way that "indoor instruction" cannot, the aims of education. The educational systems of this nation would be hard put to justify operating camp-like programs in direct conflict with the services presently performed by other agencies and institutions.[1] The outdoor school, however, conceived as an extension of the school facility whose purposes and aims are in keeping with the aims of education can be justified.

What fundamental purpose then should resident outdoor education serve? It should provide the setting for curricular experiences that cannot be offered, or achieved as readily within the confines of the school building. School studies are very often far removed from reality. The outdoor school setting provides the natural environment where pupils have the opportunity to come to grips with reality ...where close, first-hand observation, independent investigation, analysis of data, and problem solving are the order of the day.

The American public school ought to provide the opportunity to learn the ways of democracy by living it. Very little living actually takes place in our classrooms today. The ideals and principles of democracy are best acquired through actual practice. The important task of fitting the individual to assume his responsibilities in a democratic society is accomplished by first having him function in a miniature society. The socialization values which our educative institutions purport to foster can be implemented through realistic practice in the total-living situation of a resident outdoor school experience.

Another fundamental task of outdoor education is to provide purposeful work experience for youngsters. The transition from an agrarian society to a highly industrialized nation, along with accompanying urbanization has placed the modern day pupil in a situation where there is minimum opportunity for purposeful work experience. The modern home hs long ceased to fill this need. Nor can the school, under ordinary circumstances, fulfill such a need. The unique setting of the resident outdoor school, however, with its emphasis on self-responsibility, helps to satisfy the basic need of man to perform useful work.

During the past decade there has been a strong tendency for some outdoor education programs to become highly structured. This move toward a high degree of organization and standardization is a move in the wrong direction. Granted, outdoor education should be an integral part of the curriculum. Likewise, outdoor learning activities should be closely related to the on-going, indoor instructional program of the schools. In fact there should be no significant distinction between

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[1] Institution in this context referring to those establishments of society as church, state, etc.

education and outdoor education. The distinction, if in fact it exists at all, is merely one of setting, where-in certain facets of education may be more readily facilitated. This distinction, albeit ever-so-slight, is of fundamental importance.

Outdoor education ought to complement the on-going instructional program of the school. It should not become school-like, however. When the structure and content of the outdoor school curriculum becomes too much like school, so there is virtually no difference, outdoor education will have expired. Outdoor education needs to retain its individuality. Only in this manner can it continue to enrich the school curriculum. Educators should resist the tendency to standardize and regiment outdoor school curricular experiences. There should, in fact, be a concerted effort to preserve the sphere of experimentation within which early school camping ventures operated. Solving the problems of daily outdoor living, for example, is one of many possibilities that may constitute the core of the outdoor school curriculum. The paradigm in Figure 1 on page 3 will illustrate the point. The inner circle represents all activities experienced in the outdoor setting -- the outdoor school curriculum. The unifying core of the resident outdoor curriculum ought to be the total living experience. Various learning activities grow out of the problems faced in living and working together in a miniature community. Furthermore, these experiences of living and learning in the outdoor school relate to the overall goals of education. The general objectives of education as defined by the Mid-Century Committee on Outcomes in Elementary Education fall under the areas of (1) physical development, health, body care; (2) individual social and emotional development; (3) the social world; (4) social relations; (5) ethical behavior, standards, values; (6) the physical world; (7) communication; (8) quantitative relationships; and (9) esthetic development. [2]

Figure 2, also on page 3, will help to further clarify the relationship of school camping to outdoor education, and to the school curriculum. Outdoor education is simply one of an infinite number of approaches through which learning may be facilitated to achieve these goals. As a teaching-learning media it cuts across subject matter areas and is inter-disciplinary in nature. School camping, or resident outdoor education is one means which may be employed to help carry out the curricular aims of the school. No modern educational system can afford to ignore this frontier of curriculum development. Outdoor education provides an avenue for facilitating, complementing, and enriching instruction without which any system of education would be incomplete.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

The nature and complexity of modern society prevent contemporty education from confining itself to the classroom. The reason for this are multiple and complex in themselves. First, technological advances in transportation and communication media have considerably enlarged the scope of the instructional

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[2] Chester W. Harris (ed.) Encyclopedia of Educational Research, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 431.

THE OUTDOOR SETTING
OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION
Living Together
Interest Activities growing out of Problem-solving
Work Experience Maintenance of the Resident Community
Study Activities Relating To the School Curriculum

Figure 1. A theoretical framework for the outdoor school curriculum.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION					
CURRICULUM	Field Trips	School Gardens	School Farms	School Forests	School Camps
	Language			Arts	
	Social		Studies		
	Mathematics				
		Science			
	Health	and Physical Education			
		Music	and	Art	

Figure 2. The relationship of outdoor education and school camping to the curriculum.

environment. Second, the American public school, as a social institution, is charged with providing pupils with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to function effectively in their environment. The increased amount of leisure facing modern man has broadened the scope of education's responsibility for meeting this need. The out-of-doors constitutes a huge resource for recreation and leisure. Schools must now search for ways to educate for the optimum use of this resource. Third, content that is removed from its natural setting tends to become sterile and unrealistic. Fourth, if education is life, it cannot be isolated from the setting where living takes place. The dualisms of school and society and the school in the community cannot be separated. They are interrelated -- fused together in an inseparable bond. Fifth, as society has become more complex the school has broadened its objectives and expanded its functions. For these reasons the horizons of the public school classroom have expanded and must continue to stretch if the needs of society are to be met.

Teacher Education's Responsibility

What does this imply for teacher education? Events of the recent past point to the fact that each year a greater number of pupils and teachers participate in outdoor learning activities. This fact, in itself, requires that pre-service and in-service teachers receive some professional preparation for utilizing the out-of-doors as a teaching media.

Conducting physical education and play activities outdoors is traditional. However, the idea of teacher and pupils living together in a camp-like situation as part of the regular school program is a relatively recent educational innovation. An innovation, none-the-less, which is well grounded on a sound philosophical base. The development of outdoor education in many instances, was implemented through experimentation in teacher education. Institutions of higher education are now confronted with the responsibility for providing teachers with the competencies for teaching as effectively outside the classroom as inside. The competent instructor ought to be qualified and prepared to teach in a variety of settings. The versatile teacher should be able to utilize a number of resources in the community to enrich and vitalize learning in the various subject matter areas.

Outdoor education does not require new or radical teaching methods. Outdoor teaching simply calls for the application of time and tested instructional methods to a different educational setting. What is needed is an imaginative and visionary approach to education. Outdoor instruction does require an experimental approach to teaching. There is a greater degree of freedom for pupil exploration in the outdoor classroom. The successful teacher must be especially perceptive to opportunities for capitalizing on pupil interest as it develops on the spot. He needs to be flexible and capable of adapting his teaching methods to a variety of teaching situations. The teacher outdoors needs to be particularly aware of pupil goals. Furthermore, he must pay close attention to the learner's purposes as they change in the dynamically fluid total-living situation of the resident outdoor education experience.

Importance of Survival Skills

Another rather crucial implication for teacher education is that survival skills may someday take precedence over the more traditional areas of academic proficiency. Professor John M. Stephens of John Hopkins University points out that there is little immediate use for most of the things taught in school.

Furthermore, he claims the things with which schools concern themselves have very little to do with man's ability to survive. For example, schools mostly teach how to look at symbols, how to organize symbols, how to make marks, how to recount legends, and how to count. [3] It may one day be significantly more important to know how to survive on wild plants, how to build a fire in wet weather, how to provide for shelter in the open, how to purify water, and how to trap small game, then to know the parts of speech, or ancient history. This is not to deprecate the importance of the humanities, by any means, but to focus attention upon the realities of today's world. If the Cold War persists and the threat of automic warfare continues to hang heavy, the school systems of this, and other nations, may have to face up to yet another task - that of educating for survival in a decimated world.

The Need for Personal Adequacy

In this era of specialization pre-service teachers need opportunities to achieve educational breadth. As individuals who are entrusted with the responsibility to wield strong influence on the youth of this nation, teachers must be versatile. They need to have interests that extend beyond the realm of "schools" and "schooling." They must be able to function effectively with youngsters in situations outside the formal classroom. The practicum of a resident outdoor education experience enables the student of professional education to acquire competencies not ordinarily encountered in traditional teacher education. The Outdoor School as a laboratory for curriculum development and instructional experimentation ought to become an integral part of every teacher's professional education.

Teacher education should develop the outdoor education point of view among pre-service teachers. This implies a recognition of the community as an extension of the classroom. Teacher education must be on the frontier edge, blazing the trail for exploration, experimentation, and promotion of outdoor education.

III. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS FOR OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Programs of outdoor education afford the opportunity to make a significant contribution to education by providing a laboratory setting conducive to educational research. Since nineteen thirty approximately 117 studies have been conducted at the doctoral level. [4] The research dealing with the various facets of outdoor education and school camping is by no means exhaustive, even though the amount of research on this topic has increased steadily over the past twenty years.

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[3] John M. Stephens in a lecture entitled, "Mechanisms Which Account For the Emergence of Schools," delivered at The Pennsylvania State University, May 17, 1960.

[4] Research in Outdoor Education, American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Washington, D.C., 1973.

Many early studies were an attempt to justify resident outdoor education as a legitimate educational function of the public school. The rapid development of resident outdoor education programs in various sections of the country during the Forties and Fifties was paralleled by a corresponding preponderance of research devoted purely to the administrative and organizational aspects of operating an outdoor education facility. Research studies which were basically proposals for the implementation of a specific resident outdoor school development also showed a proportionate increase. There is, however, a dearth of experimental studies in this area of education, as well as a notable lack of research concerned with the philosophical implications of the outdoor education movement.

While it is obvious that a great deal of additional research is needed on this topic, outdoor education's greatest contribution to research may well be in the experimental setting it provides for psychological and sociological study. The resident outdoor school is a self-contained laboratory of human relations. Pupil behavior may be observed rather intensively over a concentrated period of time. Problems dealing with peer relations, group social structure, concept formation, problem solving, and the like ought to be investigated in the total-living situation of the resident outdoor school.

No study in the research conducted thus far has undertaken the problem of constructing a theoretical framework for the various aspects of outdoor education. This is a top priority problem. Significant research should have some theoretical framework as a base. One example of such a framework would be the work of Getzels and Guba at the University of Chicago. These two researchers developed a theoretical framework to explain social behavior of administrators.[5] Studies have since been designed to investigate various hypotheses based on Getzels' and Guba's role theory model. Outdoor education is in need of similar theoretical structure to promote and guide further research.

Educators make many claims for outdoor education. They claim that subject matter is enriched and made more meaningful through firsthand experiencing in the out-of-doors. They claim that a high degree of pupil-teacher rapport is established in the resident outdoor school situation. They claim that principles of democracy are better learned by living them in the total-living situation. They claim that significant changes occur in the social structure of a group while living together at the resident outdoor school. These claims pose many possibilities for additional research. Each claim needs further investigation and substantiation.

Recommendations for Research

Investigation is needed in the areas of curriculum, learning, child development, adjustment, behavior, instruction, and teacher education as related to outdoor education. Some problems that warrant study are listed below:

-- What changes in the social structure of a group actually do occur in one week of resident outdoor education?

-- What subjects can best be taught in the outdoor setting? It is inconceivable that all subjects lend themselves to outdoor instruction.

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[5]Jacob W. Getzels and Egon G. Guba, "Social Behavior and the Administrative Process," The School Review, 63:423-441, Winter, 1957.

Also related to this problem: what concepts, generalizations, and principles of science, mathematics, or whatever, are gained through firsthand experience in the outdoor laboratory?

-- What evidence is there to indicate that democratic principles are learned in the resident outdoor school situation?

-- Does teacher behavior or role change while in the outdoor school situation? Is teacher-pupil rapport improved?

-- Is it possible for the teacher to gain insight and understanding of pupil behavior that would not have occurred in the classroom?

The main concern in each of the above problems deals with the fundamental questions: what evidence is there that such gains do, in fact, take place? The findings, of such investigation would have significant bearing on teacher education. For example, what specific outdoor related teaching competencies ought to be included in pre-service teacher education?

There also is a need to replicate certain studies. The New York City camping education experiment[6] ought to be repeated with other grade groups in other school systems. Additional data measuring subject matter achievement in the outdoor school as compared to classroom learning are needed. Kranzer's study[7] also warrants replication. Additional data are needed to substantiate the conclusion that desirable social and democratic behavioral changes among sixth graders are effected more readily in the outdoor school setting than in the regular classroom. The claim that sixth grade pupils of "...low mental ability may tend to improve slightly in critical thinking as a result of a camping experience..."[8], warrants further corroboration.

Outdoor education has brought a new dimension to educational research. The elements of curriculum, method, and administration have broadened in scope. When research points the way aspects of curriculum content, instructional technique, and administrative procedure as related to outdoor education may undergo change. Theory and practice are not dichotomous. One re-enforces the other. The task of research in outdoor education is to bring meaning and substantiation to theory, and to improve practice through experiementation.

IV. A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Outdoor education as a curriculum development in American public education is here to stay. Experience has demonstrated that even formal learning cannot be confined entirely to the four walls of the school. Too many community resources

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[6] New York City Board of Education, Extending Education Through Camping, (Carbondale, Ill., Outdoor Education Association, Inc., 1948).

[7] H. C. Kranzer, "Effects of School Camping on Selected Aspects of Pupil Behavior -- An Experiemental Study," (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1958).

[8] Ibid., p. 83.

beckon, for instruction to be limited to the traditional tools of the classroom. Even with the advent of educational television, teaching machines, programmed learning and the like there is no substitute for the impace and richness of direct experience in the natural environment.

Flexible programming and imaginative approaches to implementing learning continue to make inroads on formal instruction. The stereotypes of traditional teaching are left behind in the extended classroom. No bells ring to signal the end of a class period thus throttling learning abruptly - often at the most inappropriate time. The learner is not limited to the printed page for stimulus. Instead he deals with the reality of his own firsthand observation and investigation. We make no claim that outdoor education is the panacea to cure the ills of education. It is, however, another avenue available to those charged with the crucial task of educating our young which enables them to vitalize and enrich the instructional programs of our schools.

What lies ahead for outdoor education? The utilization of the out-of-doors to complement instruction will take place at various grade levels. The concept of extending the classroom is not the province of any one grade or subject matter area. The classroom extended is universally applicable to all grade levels and to many subjects.

The outdoor education surface has barely been scratched. Notwithstanding the fact that the use of school grounds, school farms, school forests, and resident outdoor schools continue to develop at a phenomenal rate, outdoor education has made hardly a dent in the total educational program of our schools. The potential for growth in this direction is virtually unlimited...limited only by the vision and imagination of our school people.

With millions flocking to our outdoor areas each year seeking release from the emotional strains of modern day high tension living the educational use of the natural environment by schools will assume ever increasing importance. The school system lacking outdoor teaching areas or lacking teachers who possess the skills and competencies for teaching in the extended classroom will be educationally deficient in this most vital commodity for learning.

Many of the natural areas of this great land of ours are fast disappearing before the onslaught of the super highway. No amount of technological progress can take the place of or restore these areas with their natural wonders. There is no adequate substitute for reality. Modern education can little afford to lose these outdoor laboratories for learning. Nor can modern education afford to ignore learning about the out-of-doors in the out-of-doors as a fundamental aspect of the American heritage.

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